

Remarks by Ambassador Harry K. Thomas, Jr.
Museo Pambata
January 14, 2011, 10:00 a.m.

Manila Mayor and Museo Pambata Honorary Chair, The Honorable Alfredo Lim; Vice Mayor Isko Moreno; President and Visionary of Museo Pambata, Ms. Nina Lim-Yuson:

Magandang umaga sa inyong lahat at manigong bagong taon (Good morning everyone and Happy New Year). Allow me to wish everyone a prosperous 2011.

As you all know, I only moved to the Philippines last year, and I just had the pleasure of spending my first Christmas and New Year in the Philippines. You have elevated holiday celebrations to an art form! I have never experienced a Christmas this festive. I enjoyed learning about the *Simbang Gabi* (nine-day novena of dawn masses from December 16-24). I had my first taste (OR wished to try) the famous “*puto bumbong*.” I must say, the Filipinos are fond of eating purple stuff! You have your *ube* ice cream, *ube* jam, and various purple-colored rice cakes. We can add it to the list of wonders of the world.

Holiday celebrations are of course for children, and children are also why we are here today. We have reached a point where there are significant concerns about whether the environment we know today will still be there for our children. I have a 22-year old daughter myself, and I would like to be a grandfather someday. I hope that my daughter and my future grandchildren inherit a world that is safe, healthy and clean.

The horrific shooting in Arizona that killed six and wounded 19 Americans last week shocked Americans and the world. We are examining the factors that might have led to such a heinous act. And we are stricken with grief that nine-year old Christina Taylor Green, born on 9/11/2001 and full of promise and youthful hope and joy, was among those killed.

In his speech two days ago at a memorial service at the University of Arizona, President Obama expressed our collective heartache, but also talked about reasons for hope. One reason for hope is that Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords shows signs of recovering from the devastating bullet wounds to her head. Being here to help inaugurate this new science room that features a rock from the moon, I am reminded that Congresswoman Giffords happens to be married to a NASA astronaut.

The President called on us to create hope and make thing better. Remembering young Christina, President Obama said, "I want to live up to her expectations.... All of us -- we should do everything we can to make sure this country lives up to our children's expectations.

Teaching future generations to cherish, protect, and preserve the environment is critical to every nation. It requires vision, perseverance, and passion. Saving the world is not something that any one person can do by themselves. That is why I consider this event of great importance.

By opening this new Science Room and enhancing this wonderful museum, you are doing your part to create hope and make thing better for the children of the Philippines.

Mrs. Yuson, your vision for this museum is a gift to this country. I thank you, your colleagues, and Mayor Lim for breathing life into Museo Pambata. I am also proud that Motorola, a major U.S. corporation, is investing in children's education, especially where it concerns the environment.

Thank you for inviting me to join you all today. It is an honor to witness such a meaningful collaboration. Congratulations to Motorola, Museo Pambata and the City of Manila. This is a wonderful New Year's gift to the children of Manila and the Philippines.

Mabuhay ang paligid, mabuhay ang atin mga kabataan, mabuhay ang Museo Pambata !